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Comparative Urban Studies Project



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URBAN REGENERATION AND REVITALIZATION IN THE AMERICAS: TOWARD A STABLE STATE



Edited by
Fernando Carrion M.
and **Lisa M. Hanley**



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PREFACE

URBAN RENOVATION AND THE NATIONAL PROJECT

FERNANDO CARRIÓN M. AND LISA M. HANLEY

INTRODUCTION

The Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Program on the Study of the City, FLACSO-Ecuador organized an international seminar on December 16 and 17, 2004 entitled “Urban Regeneration and Revitalization in the Americas: Toward a Stable State.”

There were 14 papers presented by academics, authorities and functionaries from a variety of different professions who focused their presentations on local, national and Latin American examples. A similarly diverse group of more than 80 people attended the meeting. These varied approaches to urban questions greatly enriched both the presentations and the discussions; indeed, the heterogeneity of the seminar was noted as a positive factor.

Today, with the publication of this book, the results of the debates and reflections are offered to a wider audience in order to share the important information presented at the seminar, and to promote the validity and importance of the proposal to contribute to the social, political and economic sustainability of our countries through an urban project. In other words, with this publication we want to consolidate and share the main idea behind the seminar—that a collective project on the city can contribute to the stability of our states and to the economic and social development of our countries.

THE CITY AS PROTAGONIST

The academic proposal of the seminar and publication is related to the following hypothesis: today urban processes are very significant in the constitution of stable states and sustainable economies. This is an important vision because until now urban issues have been understood more as a result of structural decisions made by public institutions than as contributions in their own right to economic development, political stability and creating a strong culture.

A hypothesis like this leads us to ask how an urban project can strengthen institutions. Even more directly related to the topic of the event, we ask how an urban renovation project can be an important component of a national project leading to the construction of a legitimate and stable state.

It is important to discuss the meaning of urban renovation for public administration, governance, economic sustainability and social development. Previously, urban renovation was thought of in its inverse relationship to public management and governance of the urban area. It is more interesting to understand what the city can do for the economy, culture, society and politics at the local, national and international levels, based on a conception of the city as a solution and not as a problem or pathology.

For example, local authorities gain political legitimacy when they focus their urban policies on city centers. This increased legitimacy, in turn, allows for greater stability and governability. Here we have the illustrative cases of Quito and Bogota. The current mayor of Quito, Paco Moncayo, saw his popularity rise from the moment he advocated the relocation of informal street commerce in the historic center of Quito. In Bogota, former mayors Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa forwarded an interesting notion of public space as the principle axis of the city. These interventions in city centers gave authorities legitimacy, strengthened a pattern of urbanization and promoted a broad sense of belonging among city residents.

We should not underestimate the economic importance of municipal investment in city centers. For example, investment in Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires has helped generate economic activity and strengthen the city center. Growth in the technological infrastructure of a neighborhood in Santiago, Chile has helped promote competition. In Guayaquil, the "Malecón 2000" project has strengthened the local and regional identities of the residents and produced an important economic zone. Similarly, a proposal for the development of tourism in Old Havana makes the historic center a platform for innovation within the sector, the city and the Cuban state.

These kinds of development show the importance of renovation projects in city centers that seek to contribute to and be part of national projects. Furthermore, they demonstrate that such efforts must be based on a social consensus resulting from broad and varied forms of participation. This presupposes a collective project in which there are public-private and public-public mechanisms of cooperation.

Preface

The seminar sought to rethink the relationship between the city and urban areas in terms of the market, the state, the private sector and the public sector, on both the local and national levels. It is essential to address these issues now that the market is more important to urban development than before, especially when state public policies control such development. This leads us to examine the new functions of the state related to the city and how the city can, at the same time, strengthen state institutions.

This discussion is even more important in the context of state reform processes through privatization and decentralization, and in the context of globalization, which forces us to conceive of the city simultaneously in its supranationality and subnationality,¹ with the market playing a significant role. In other words, the city today is experiencing the denationalization of political dimensions (greater importance of local government), cultural dimensions (local symbols of identity) and economic dimensions (local development) in the context of globalization.

It could even be said that we are seeing a return to city-states because the municipality—the level of government closest to civil society—becomes the nucleus of social integration and because urban area becomes a political and economic actor on the international scene (Sassen and Patel 1996). Today's Latin American municipality is highly competent, has greater economic resources and is more democratic. In this context, cities compete amongst themselves, thereby dissolving the borders of national states.

All of this forces us to rethink the state, the public sector and the nation in their relationship with the market from an urban perspective, and more specifically, from the point of view of urban and historic centers. In other words, we must ask how we can construct a historic center project that contributes to a national project that, in turn, strengthens state stability and economic sustainability. Historically this is possible in Latin America due to the fact that the demographic transition has produced a decrease in rates of urbanization, which makes it possible to think about the existing city, about the return to the built city and about a city of quality over quantity. However, due to the process of globalization, the city is also positioned as a protagonist

1. Following Borja and Castells, "it could be said that national states are too small to control and direct the new system's global flows of power, wealth, and technology and too big to represent the plurality of the society's interests and cultural identities, therefore losing legitimacy at once as representative institutions and as efficient organizations" (1998: 18).

in a global, urban network. In other words, today more than ever a policy on urban and historic centers should be part of a national project.

THE CITY AS A COMPONENT OF STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the last half century there has been a rapid increase in the urban population and the number of cities in all the countries of Latin America, to the extent that the region is primarily urban. In 1950, 41 percent of the population lived in cities; it was estimated that for the year 2000 it would be 77 percent (Lates 2001). This means that the percentage of the population concentrated in cities practically doubled in half a century and that, at the same time, the majority of the region's population lives an urban lifestyle. Currently, more than 300 million people live in urban areas.

On the other hand, the urban universe of Latin America is characterized by having two cities with more than 15 million inhabitants, 28 cities with more than a million inhabitants, and 35 cities with more than 600,000 inhabitants. This means that there are 65 metropolitan areas in Latin America.

This pattern of urbanization leads us to put forward two propositions that guide this chapter. First, the fact that population, economy and politics are concentrated in urban areas in a context of internationalization and localization, of globalization (Robertson 1992), makes us think that cities have become significant political actors. In other words, today global cities are a new world actor in addition to national states and the world economy (Sassen and Patel 1996). In the context of globalization—with the opening of economies and processes of decentralization taking place throughout the world—the functions and weight of cities tend to be redefined, making cities into spaces of integration, belonging and social representation. In other words, cities today are less of a problem and more of a solution in that they contribute significantly to political stability,² the reduction of poverty³ and economic sustainability.⁴

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2. The city is the political space (polis) where citizenry is constituted. After the decentralization of the state, municipalities have become the main nucleus of representation, proximity to society, stability, and legitimacy.
 3. It is easier to change patterns of gender inequality in urban rather than rural areas. It is more feasible to reduce poverty in cities through improvements in unsatisfied basic needs, employment, and income.
 4. Supply and demand are concentrated in urban areas and the city is the axis of the model of accumulation on a global scale.

Second, the built city and its distinct centers have acquired greater weight as a result of the demographic transition experienced in the region. There has been a significant reduction in the rates of urbanization as well as in the growth rates of the largest cities (Villa 1994). The rate of urbanization for Latin America was reduced from 4.6 in 1950, to 4.2 in 1960, to 3.7 in 1970, to 2.6 in 1990, and to 2.3 in the year 2000 (Habitat 1996). It is estimated that for the year 2030, the rate of urbanization will be around one percent. This new demographic condition reduces the pressure for urban growth and redirects focus to urban centers. In other words, we move from a logic of centrifugal urbanization to a logic of centripetal urbanization, where center areas play an important role.

As cities grow less than before, it is possible to begin to think about the quality—not just quantity—of urban areas. Since cities, now have new, more global functions, it is also possible to think that the existing city and, more precisely, the renovation of city centers, could become a platform for urban innovation and projects that contribute to economic and political stability at the national level.

Nevertheless, in the cities of Latin America there are two related intra-urban bottlenecks that complicate the chances of this occurring. One has to do with the symbolic universe contained in urban and historic centers, which are currently subject to permanent social, economic and cultural deterioration. This erosion of memory damages the population's feelings of integration, representation and belonging beyond the space that contains them (supra-spatiality) and the time in which they were produced (history). In addition, the center, as a public space, suffers due to the weight of the market and urban fragmentation, which become an impediment to urban development, social integration and a strong citizenry. In other words, the deterioration of symbolic patrimony and the erosion of mechanisms of integration contribute to factors of social instability.

In addition, poverty has become a typically urban problem as the number of poor in Latin American cities has increased. At the end of the 1990s, 61.7 percent of poor people lived in urban areas while in 1970 it was 36.9 percent, which means that there has been an accelerated process of urbanization of poverty. Currently, there are more than 130 million poor people living in Latin America's cities. According to CEPAL (2001), 37 percent of urban inhabitants are poor and 12 percent are indigent. This kind of poverty has several effects. First, it significantly reduces the internal mar-

ket. Second, it degrades historic heritage because of the intensive use of historic infrastructure. Lastly, cities of poor people make the cities poor. Ultimately, the concentration of urban poverty is a source of political and economic instability.

In Latin American cities, poverty tends to predominate in two geographic areas—the center and the periphery.⁵ In both areas, there is a high intensity of use of historic infrastructure, which leads to a decreased quality of life of those living there, creating a vicious circle,⁶ where the deterioration of both the natural and built urban environment becomes the cause and effect of the existence of poverty in the population. The growth in density and overcrowding in city centers is evidence of this phenomenon because it leads to the intensive use of space. The logic of the slum leads to the destructive use of historical heritage in city centers. Therefore, central areas of the region have attracted high concentrations of poverty, and degradation of the city center has become an impediment to economic development and a bottleneck for social integration.

Nevertheless, centers have the opportunity to overcome these limitations through urban renovation, as long as the center is understood as a public space that determines the way of life for local society (integration, belonging and representation) and a way of organizing a territory (urban structure), inscribed in larger urban projects that are part of a national proposal. This kind of approach must focus on historic value (economic, political and cultural) and not on conservation.

Renovation can also foster economic growth and sustained urban development. This allows popular sectors to be able to benefit from economic growth through job creation and direct or indirect salary increases. In this way, the improvement in quality of life occurs through social mobility and the formation of social capital with networks, solid institutions and social cohesion.

5. "Households in neighborhoods and consolidated housing where jobs and income—formal as well as informal—are qualified as poor. This expression of urban poverty has increased significantly in the cities of the region. We find it, on one hand, in central and peri-central neighborhoods in decay and stagnation and, on the other hand, in low-quality residential complexes which were built to house the poorest of the poor. Because of their vulnerability to economic fluctuations and fluctuations in the job market, these families demonstrate today, in many cases, impoverishment associated with their residential location, the deterioration of their housing and the inability to afford formal housing" (MacDonald 2003).

6. "Recent studies (PNUD/CEPAL 1999) demonstrate with data from Montevideo that the social level of the sector or neighborhood has its own effects on student advancement and the inactivity of youth, even after controlling for the educational climate of the home" (Arriagada 2000: 17).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into three parts. The first part, “Historic Centers, Public Space and Government,” discusses the existence of heterogeneous, *fragmented cities with a diversity of spaces having explicit functions that end up prefiguring poli-centered urban areas*, on the one hand, and, on the other, centers and peripheries related in a complex way. The equilibrium between historic and modern centers and peripheries is essential. This equilibrium will ensure that the renovation of the center does not produce an *exodus of the population that will expand and degrade the peripheries or a periphery with no infrastructure or patrimony*. If the city is fragmented or split, its centers and peripheries are too. For this reason, urbanism should be understood as a democratic strategy to revitalize the center, where poverty and degradation have historically been concentrated, and produce central services and infrastructure in the periphery. In other words, the fragmented city must be stitched together through a process of social integration.

In his opening remarks at the seminar, Blair A. Ruble, Co-Director of the Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Wilson Center, reflected on the meaning of public space in strengthening national states. In this volume, Ruble expands on these remarks using the case of the plaza—or *maydan*—in Ukraine, which became the salvation of democratic values in that country recently.

Fernando Carrión, Coordinator of the Program on the Study of the City at FLACSO, discusses “The Historic Center as an Object of Desire” in chapter 2, where he develops several hypotheses regarding the relationship between the historic center, public space, and large urban projects, working from the understanding that the historic center is the public space *par excellence*, and, for that reason, it is an articulating element of the city. This proposal is developed in the optimistic context of the city as a solution and considers the historic center as an object of desire. Carrión distinguishes the model of the future city that symbolizes public space as a place for civic interaction in a way that elevates the role of space to one of symbolic centrality and heterogeneity.

In his chapter, “The Relationship between State Stability and Urban Regeneration: The Contrast between Presidential and Municipal Administrations in Large Latin American Cities,” Gabriel Murillo, from the University of the Andes in Bogota, Colombia, posits there is an interdependent relationship between the government of large cities and state

political stability. There is no doubt that successful management in the municipal government of a large city can contribute to national political stability. To further his point, he analyzes the case of Bogota in the context of urban primacy and national macro-economic limitations. The public policies of the last five administrations of the city of Bogota serve to show the logic of interdependency between good local administration and state political stability.

In chapter 4, Alfredo Rodríguez, SUR Corporación de Estudios Sociales y Educación, and Ana Sugranyes, Habitat Internacional Coalition (HIC), call attention to a new housing problem—not people without housing, as was the situation 20 years ago, but rather people living in substandard housing that may negatively impact the city. Rodríguez and Sugranyes challenge Chilean housing policy, considered a successful model for financing that has sparked interest throughout the region, to the extent that some governments are indiscriminately copying it without the benefit of analysis. The reality of the situation in Santiago shows that successful housing financing policies can create new urban problems in the absence of comprehensive housing policy.

The second part of the book, “The Politics of Urban Identity: Patrimony and Memory in the Democratic System,” refers to the relationship of history (memory) and culture (identity), which should lead to a strengthening of democracy, the construction and social appropriation of the symbolic powers as well as in the socialization of patrimony. The axis of the debate proposed is focused on the relationship between history and patrimony and between public policies of innovation and conservation. What becomes clear is that there are different notions of heritage and patrimony. Indeed, patrimony is a continual creation that is constantly being reinvented; there is no one memory but rather a proliferation of memories.

In chapter 5, “Patrimony as a Disciplinary Device and the Banalization of Memory: An Historic Reading from the Andes,” Eduardo Kingman Garcés and Ana María Goetschel, FLACSO Ecuador, seek to recuperate the historical character of the patrimony. They try to show the arbitrary nature of the notion of memory forwarded by policies of renovation and propose, at the same time, that the idea of patrimony leads to loss instead of reinforcing historical meaning. Furthermore, they claim that the political dimension of patrimony is ignored; it is presented as something inherent and natural or else defined in a technical, and in this sense, neutral, way with no political context.

Preface

Josep Subirós, GAO, *Idees i Projectes* and the *Accademia di Architettura Mendrisio*, in chapter 6, reflects upon “Cultural Strategies and Urban Renovation: The Experience of Barcelona.” He argues that the urban renovation projects undertaken in Barcelona do not respond as much to urban conceptions as to political strategies of reinvention, normalization, and democratic consolidation after three years of civil war and 36 years of the Franco dictatorship. An important characteristic of the urban renovation that took place in Barcelona between 1979 and 1997 is the marriage of urban and civic concerns, the use of urban planning as an instrument of civility, as a tool with which to contribute to the construction of a certain civic identity and new forms of bringing together an infinite variety of groups, interests, attitudes, values, and memories inherent in a large city. In this chapter, he addresses the urban renovation process in Barcelona in terms of the political and cultural dimensions of the main architectonic and urban operations in the period analyzed and their connection with the general process of reestablishing democracy in Spain after the death of Franco.

In chapter 7, “‘More City,’ Less Citizenship: Urban Renovation and the Anihilation of Public Space,” X. Andrade, *New School University*, draws upon ethnographic research conducted between 2001 and 2004 to analyze the “urban renewal” of Guayaquil. He uses two case studies to make his argument. The first addresses urban reforms in the city’s center that lead to a strictly disciplined and privatized public space. The second case study is related to a case of social hysteria about gang violence and provides a clear example of urban polarization and its expression in the construction of a market of fear. In the background, the municipality’s “More Security” plan promotes the privatization of public space by conceding policing control of the streets to private security companies. This chapter describes what can happen when communities close themselves off and limit their interaction with other sectors of society.

Silvia Fajre, *Government of Buenos Aires*, discusses “Cultural Heritage and Urban Identity: Shared Management for Economic Development” in chapter 8. The chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of cultural heritage as being charged with content by the community. Therefore, patrimony requires a community-based definition not a purely technical one. Beyond that, it is important to understand cultural heritage as an economic value that generates resources and employment and, therefore, contributes to sustainability. Policies concerning cultural heritage should support the supply of cul-

tural events and assets, which, in turn, increase social capital and make patrimony sustainable in the framework of the market economy.

In chapter 9, Diego Carrión Mena, Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito, reflects on “Quito: The Challenges of a New Age.” Carrión outlines a series of projects for the city and notes the importance of convoking citizen participation in implementing these plans. He also discusses the challenges facing Quito—and other cities—in terms of coordinating and carrying out urban projects that lead to more efficient, democratic, and inclusive cities.

The third part, “The Ties between Historic Centers and Social Participation,” leads us directly to the topic of the relationship between space and power, where historic centers become disputed territories where some actors dominate others and where the image of power is permanently present. In sum, it could be said that power is not expressed in just one center, just as there is not only one power in the center.

In his chapter, “The Center Divided,” Paulo Ormino de Azevedo, Universidade Federal da Bahia, develops the idea of the divided city that Milton Santos and Aníbal Quijano have discussed. In historic centers there is a predominantly poor population and a series of important monuments. The importance of this center is disputed by the central business district, where the most dynamic activities of the city are located. In this way, the center is divided and the city itself is a series of fragments.

In chapter 11, Lisa M. Hanley and Meg Ruthenburg, Woodrow Wilson Center, investigate the “The Symbolic Consequences of Urban Revitalization: The Case of Quito,” in which they take a historical approach to the policies developed since the city was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO to the present day, trying to evaluate the impacts of such policies on the population and on the city. The authors suggest that with the growth of the city in the 1970s due to the oil boom, there was a significant deterioration of the center, which is only beginning to be reversed now. They focus on the process of formalization of informal street commerce and how it has achieved important results in other areas, such as citizen security, transportation, municipal resources, and the legitimacy of authority. The authors conclude by noting that the incorporation of public participation in local governance could provide a certain level of local and national stability.

Mónica Moreira, White March for Security and Life Foundation, reflects on “Participatory Government for the Sustainability of Historic Centers” in

chapter 12. She bases her study on the case of Quito and points out the particularities and difficulties of participation in the historic center. For example, there is a great diversity of actors or subjects, some from the historic center itself and some from outside, each with its own interests and institutional expressions. She discusses different forms of participation and concludes with a series of important recommendations.

Despite at least 50 years of interventions in Latin American historic centers, these centers continue to have concentrations of poverty. When there are not high levels of poverty, it has been due to the expulsion of the resident population through processes of residential and commercial gentrification. All of this is based on a conservationist discourse that tends to reify heritage and memory.

It is time to put a human face on urban renovation, so that it can be a platform for innovation in the city, a mechanism for the reinvention of local government, and a contribution toward social integration and economic sustainability.

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